Entrepreneurial Librarianship in Modern Libraries

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LIM 593B: Independent Research in Library and Information Management

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Abstract

The rise of personal-use information technologies has raised questions about the relevance of libraries in modern society. Entrepreneurial librarianship proposes an approach that equips librarians to view these technologies as opportunities to expand their services. Entrepreneurial librarianship shares the same foundation as traditional librarianship, and should be thoughtfully considered by libraries as a means to better connect with patrons and contribute to improvements in society. Many librarians today practice entrepreneurial librarianship without the label, but active entrepreneurial librarianship helps reshape the library profession to better serve today's increasingly independent patrons.

Entrepreneurial Librarianship in Modern Libraries

The function of a library is to ensure that everyone has access to the information they need to successfully navigate their lives and societies. Many questions raised about the relevance of libraries in modern society can easily be understood by the fact that many people believe the sole purpose of the library is to provide information. In the digital age, there is no shortage of information, and for many, information is more accessible than ever. Libraries are no longer the only means by which an individual can find answers to their questions, so it is a common assumption that the rise of the Internet means the fall of libraries. This is far from the truth. How can the Internet mark the end of libraries if libraries are *using* the Internet to supplement access in their communities?

The Internet is merely a tool through which various organizations and parties can network and disseminate information, even offer products and services globally. In fact, libraries were among the first entities to adopt the Internet, realizing its potential to expand their services. The International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions Section on Information Technology has guided the use of computers and information technology in libraries since the 1960s (McCallum, 2003). As stewards of information delivery, it has been crucial for librarians to familiarize themselves with the various applications of new technology so that they may introduce, describe, and teach their communities about the benefits they can reap from them.

Part of the reason the public does not recognize librarians as stewards of digital information is because their understanding of what librarians do is often limited to their understanding of physical library buildings, not what happens behind the scenes (Prato, 2013). Consider that the library profession is much older than the Internet, by millennia. Until long-standing perceptions of librarians are critically evaluated, it will be difficult to break the mold of

librarians as "shushers" with thick glasses in dusty, outdated spaces. More importantly, librarians must be willing to analyze and reconstruct their perceptions of self to reinforce their societal role as pioneers of information technology (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014).

The starting point of this change is to recognize and abandon the underlying hierarchical structures that govern librarianship in favor of an entrepreneurial approach that pushes librarians to forge their own destiny in close collaboration with their communities. Becoming more receptive to patrons' needs at a time of rising demand for access to new technologies is a recipe for abundant opportunities. By actively making creative changes in the library that better reflect and fulfill the needs of patrons, librarians are already practicing entrepreneurial librarianship. By implementing and guiding patrons to learn, teach, and take charge of information technology for themselves, the library becomes more a more equitable space for digital access to information in the modern world (Velan, 2015).

With libraries standing for so many years, and with a wide range of functions, it seems almost absurd to question whether libraries will survive the Internet age. The goal of this paper is to discuss how entrepreneurial librarianship better equips librarians to purposefully identify and take advantage of the rapidly evolving digital landscape to combat misconceptions about the relevance of today's libraries. More specifically, entrepreneurial librarians can integrate technologies that increase the libraries' positive impact on society by boosting public access to online resources.

Literature Review

A discussion of entrepreneurial librarianship requires first an overview of two related concepts: business entrepreneurship and social entrepreneurship. In business entrepreneurship, entrepreneurs take risks driven by opportunity and use financial profit as a measure of success

(Prato, 2013). Entrepreneurship in this sense can be intimidating or off putting among librarians; those who operate non-profit organizations and emphasize community value over monetary gain. This is where social entrepreneurship comes into play. Social entrepreneurship "refers to the practice of identifying a societal problem and using entrepreneurship principles, such as innovation, to create and implement ventures that achieve change," (Prato, 2013, par. 2). Social entrepreneurship is much more library-friendly in that success is measured by the ability to address and solve societal issues rather than generate revenue.

While many librarians may not consider themselves entrepreneurs in either sense, entrepreneurial librarianship is a combination of the above concepts. Entrepreneurial librarians actively seek out and take advantage of opportunities to improve their offerings for the benefit of their communities; success is measured by the library's positive impact on them (Velan, 2015). Entrepreneurial librarianship "concerns itself with exercising initiative or providing information services and products to meet user needs in new and creative ways," (Edewor & Omosor, 2012). It does not require any increased emphasis on financial gain or deviation from the core principles of librarianship as outlined by the American Library Association (American Library Association, 2019). Entrepreneurial librarians simply come up with creative services and programs to improve society around them.

Despite these intentions, some librarians still hesitate to adopt entrepreneurial librarianship, or reject it outright (St. Clair, 1996). It can be difficult to separate entrepreneurship from its business context of financial gain, which causes anxiety about corruption in librarianship (Govan, 1988). Govan (1988) argues librarians that take their eyes off the community in favor or profit threaten the very fabric of democracy. Buschman (2004) agrees that if libraries make changes that introduce barriers to information for certain populations, they are betraying the core

function of librarianship. Libraries create value in their ability to offer free services, especially for disadvantaged and historically excluded communities (Cherinet, 2016). Active entrepreneurial librarianship does not threaten this objective. It is just a different approach to achieve results.

Another argument against entrepreneurial librarianship is that libraries are not designed to compete with for-profit, technology-driven information organizations (Govan, 1988). This argument discounts the fact that libraries can and have formed partnerships with larger organizations to help fill gaps in service to their communities (Kohli, 2015). These libraries are already successfully operating in line with the values of entrepreneurial librarianship whether they realize it or not. Entrepreneurial librarianship focuses on community improvement. Any resulting exclusion of community members or refusal to develop partnerships with other information organizations would be examples poor library management in general, not a fault unique to entrepreneurial librarianship. Any library that loses sight of its community is liable to create barriers to access.

A big part of becoming an entrepreneurial librarian is taking intentional steps to recognize and accept that no library is perfect. Once a librarian has made peace with this statement, they have freed themselves up to identify shortcomings in their programs, services, collections, and even their profession. They can then take action to address their areas of weakness. A major issue in librarianship this paper seeks to address is the operational hierarchy the profession was built upon. Successful library services are relational as patrons express and demonstrate their own needs and values. Creating comfortable spaces for patrons to take the lead in their information-seeking behavior has become a more prominent mission for libraries as the public becomes more independent in terms of accessing information (Velan, 2015).

With all this in mind, it becomes clear that the goal of entrepreneurial librarianship is not to make libraries more successful businesses. It is to make them more successful libraries. Even Govan (1988), who passionately discourages the adoption of entrepreneurial librarianship inadvertently makes a strong argument *for* it when he says, "It is vital… that we as professionals maintain our dedication to services without fees as vigorously as the commercial interests will pursue profit" (p. 38). Dedication to free access to information is at the heart of entrepreneurial librarianship and will help libraries remain relevant well into the future. The word entrepreneurial does not equate to financial motivation. Instead, it emphasizes the importance of innovating creative solutions to user-specific issues.

Contextualizing Modern Librarianship

Hierarchical to Entrepreneurial Structure

Throughout history, libraries have generally been managed by educated, upper class members of society who helped less fortunate, less educated masses gain access to stores of information (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014). While this was intentionally a noble mission and endeavor, it is now an outdated structure that is detrimental to the modern library profession, as it taints the experiences of library patrons (Cherinet, 2017). In recent years, the rise of personal computing devices like laptops and phones have given patrons the ability to access information without the aid of a librarian. Independent information-seeking behavior does not benefit from a hierarchical model of librarianship. It is better served by librarians acting as collaborators with and facilitators of the information technology that patrons have come to rely on (CollectionHQ, 2019).

Despite how hard librarians work to be helpful in their communities, the residual hierarchy acts as an invisible barrier for those who would rather conduct independent research.

McClellan and Beggan (2019) argue that since libraries have long been established as delicately ordered spaces, patrons may have come to subconsciously fear rule breaking and resulting consequences during their visits, whether real or imagined. This theory is one explanation for why individuals choose to use their personal devices for research rather than rely on an in-person librarian. Direct access to resources online has provided users a means to bypass judgement from perceived authority figures. If this is the case, it is an opportunity for entrepreneurial librarians to ask how they can make modern libraries more comfortable and navigable spaces to support independent research.

Entrepreneurial librarians can improve their patrons' experiences by making changes that facilitate user access to online collections through information technologies that patrons are already familiar with, or by teaching them to use new information technologies (MacDonald & vanDuinkerken, 2015). Unless libraries take it upon themselves to create desirable access points, many individuals will be excluded from opportunities dependent on information technology. This perpetuates existing socioeconomic disadvantages in the future for underprivileged groups. Availability of information technologies and teaching tools are examples investments that will directly benefit the community in the future. Library hosted training in professional software such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and other tools contribute to economic opportunities (Horrican, 2015).

Transactional to Relational Operations

Transactional operations refer to traditional library services like lending and returning materials, as well as answering questions regarding the collection. Relational operations strive to create value for users by cultivating space for collaboration, productivity, and social interactions (Paraschiv, 2018). The common ground between transactional and relational operations is

service to patrons. This means libraries can adopt any combination of transactional and relational operations so long as their outcomes are valuable to users. The difference between these methods is that relational operations draw inspiration from external stimuli rather than reinforce internal structure (Stover, 2016). Entrepreneurial librarians look outward to the community for guidance when planning changes and updates to services, programs, and resources. Who better to articulate the needs of the community, than community members themselves?

Interactions with patrons are pivotal to the success of modern libraries. Investment in personal relationships cultivates trust and understanding that sets the tone for future communications between community members and librarians. During these exchanges, entrepreneurial librarians can collect data on what kinds of questions patrons ask or take note of which populations are missing to customize library services. Positive interactions and specialized services promote library attendance and expose the public to the full potential of what librarians have to offer (Stover, 2016). The result is a positive feedback loop where personal interactions with patrons and resulting specialized services for the community feed each other.

Some examples of information technologies entrepreneurial librarians have implemented to meet community information technology needs include Internet service and provision of public devices that can be used to connect to the Internet. Other examples include free access to Wi-Fi, computers, tablets, e-readers, databases, virtual consultation services, e-book collections, podcasts, community resources, meeting and study rooms, and even adapted services for patrons with disabilities (Quora Contributors, 2012). To take service a step further, many libraries have also offered device loans and workshops where librarians teach patrons how to use various devices and Internet resources to support independent browsing (Horrigan, 2015). The goal is to

learn how to provide access to information technology in ways that match as many community members' needs as possible.

Information Technologies as Opportunities

Changes in Information-Providing Behavior

Though the Internet has largely taken over as the go-to destination for information seeking, libraries have a much longer reputation as destinations for knowledge, dating all the way back to the 7th century BCE (Vaughan, n.d.). Humans have always desired to preserve records of their existence for future generations. Libraries responded by evolving into cultural heritage institutions, where community members could gather and socialize as well as conduct research (Vaughan, n.d.). Thanks to modern information technology, library resources extend far beyond their walls, presenting all sorts of opportunities for entrepreneurial librarians (CollectionHQ, 2019). That said, a relevant application of entrepreneurial librarianship today is making sure the means by which libraries provide resources line up with how patrons are seeking out information at any given time.

Recent studies show that because information is so readily available via the Internet, patrons rely on library spaces more for social connection and to experiment with technologies they do not have at home than for access to physical collections (Kohli, 2015). Entrepreneurial librarians are not intimidated by this shift. They are equipped to recognize a demand for technology in the community as an opportunity to create access. The nature of librarianship, entrepreneurial or otherwise, is change. "Libraries have endured for centuries because each generation has reshaped the library in its own image, with new intellectual agendas and buildings that reflect the priorities of the community and the day" (der Weduwen & Pettegree, 2021, par. 2).

New Information-Seeking Behavior

As mentioned earlier, modern information technology has enabled independent information-seeking behaviors. Users have access to resources hosted by tech giants that offer convenient services on personal devices, like phones, tablets, and computers with Internet access (Pagowsky & Ribgy, 2014). The resulting surplus of access points has disrupted the library's prominence as the lead supplier of information and related resources (MacDonald & vanDuinkerken, 2015). Now, the inconvenience of having to approach a librarian for permission, in a sense, to view a resource, conflicts with patrons' newfound independence. This means today's librarians can no longer expect to be approached as subject authorities, and they cannot keep their resources tucked away in the name of preservation when information technology has enabled digitization of physical resources for virtual dissemination (McCallum, 2013).

An entrepreneurial librarian should reflect on this change in information-seeking behavior and recognize that just because patrons have access to information does not mean they know how to find what they're looking for. Librarians are still excellent resources to guide patrons to make the best-informed decisions for themselves by leading them to the best information on the Internet to aid inquiries. For-profit information organizations may offer massive amounts of resources, but they cannot offer the same personalized support to users that a neighborhood librarian can. By interacting with library patrons and potential patrons, learning about their needs at the source, and providing resources and services to meet those needs and improve users' lives on the front lines, librarians exercise their competitive edge over other information organizations (St. Clair, 1996).

Responding as an Entrepreneurial Librarian

A simple definition of information technology for librarians is "any process or technique that makes library operations faster" (Momoh, 2018, p2). Much like entrepreneurship, information technology is an asset to be utilized by libraries, not a force to manipulate their purpose, or end the profession (Cherinet, 2017). The more information technology advances, the more libraries will need to harness its potential to better serve their patrons. A core value of librarianship to reflect upon when implementing information technologies is free access to information for all patrons, regardless of socioeconomic status, ethnic background, political beliefs, or any other facet of identity (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014). For some populations, the library is the only place individuals are able to access the Internet and other information technologies.

As dedicated investors in the future of their communities, entrepreneurial librarians approach information technologies as assets and advantages rather than as threats. Unless libraries can consistently update existing services and operations to incorporate new technology, they will lose out on an opportunity to adequately uphold the values of service and free access (Palfrey, 2015). Libraries will not survive if they double down on analog approaches to collection, organization, and circulation instead of adapting to the changing world around them. By making collections available online and developing lending programs to provide community members with devices to access the Internet, librarians are expanding their reach and potential to create value beyond their physical facilities (Stover, 2016). Any means that support patrons' information-seeking behavior are opportunities to explore.

Though library attendance has decreased in recent years, library users have reported an increase in the library's value as a location for spending leisure time reading, studying, and accessing media. Further, library websites have reported increased traffic (Horrigan, 2015).

Many librarians have responded by reevaluating the approachability of their staff. Some of these initiatives include roving librarians that patrons may initiate interactions, and by developing online chat services to enable 24/7 communication with information professionals remotely (RUSA, 2013). If patrons are demonstrating less reliance on direct, in-person communication with librarians, then librarians must be responsive and adapt their services to meet new needs (McClellan & Beggan, 2019). These changes help increase librarians' presence without overstepping patrons' boundaries.

Practicing Entrepreneurial Librarianship

Foundational Skills

The exact skillset of an entrepreneurial librarian can be determined by individual libraries on an as-needed basis. Some examples of skills to consider are the ability to study the environment, identify trends and unmet market needs, and develop products or services that respond to those trends and needs, among others (Edewor & Omosor, 2012). Like many other aspects of librarianship, the best way to apply entrepreneurial librarianship is to do is whatever best suits your library's unique needs, goals, available resources, and community base. An entrepreneurial librarian should also take care to ensure that solutions and recommendations provide the best return on investment for the library (Buschman, 2004). Any new technology should encourage patrons to return to and invest in the library in ways that cultivate a long-term symbiotic relationship.

Entrepreneurial librarians must also be leaders who are not afraid to take the first step in a new direction, so long as they believe the journey will improve conditions for their communities and fellow librarians (Vaughan, n.d.). Entrepreneurial librarians cannot limit themselves to previously established methods of operation, or by misconceptions about their profession. They

consistently strive to exceed expectations, steadfast in their mission and dedicated to the potential of innovation. Libraries have always been dynamic spaces. Information technology only expands channels for librarians to serve patrons. For this reason, librarians should take care not to shape their identities around gatekeeping behaviors (Davis, 2008). This model is so deeply ingrained in the library profession that modern librarians often inadvertently reinforce the stereotype through their actions (Pagowsky & Rigby, 2014).

If left unchecked, gatekeeping behavior leads to self-imposed limitations on librarians' ability to raise the value of libraries in society. Libraries that cling to traditional approaches to library operations and information dissemination in today's digital society will fade into obsolescence (Quora Contributors, 2012). An entrepreneurial approach to information technology allows patrons to voice their opinions, express their needs, and offer their feedback. Entrepreneurial librarians need to be able to reflect on their understanding of their profession and recognize that the library requires patron participation to thrive. Until librarians can upset the established authoritative structure to meaningfully include patron contributions, library users will remain oblivious to full potential of their local libraries, and librarians will remain unable to deliver true stewardship (Davis, 2008).

Librarians may not have to think twice about advocating for their communities, but it might not occur to them to advocate for their own wellbeing, too. (Farkas, 2020). Entrepreneurial librarianship can help fill in this gap. For one thing, entrepreneurial librarianship requires a certain level of confidence. It is this confidence that motivates entrepreneurs to take chances (Edewor & Omosor, 2012). A library that refuses to take chances will quickly become irrelevant and, worst case scenario, end up closing its doors. Self-advocacy helps protect jobs in a world

that often has no idea what librarians are capable of. The more individuals a librarian can get to support their cause, the more likely they are to achieve their goals.

Supporting Entrepreneurial Librarians

Much of the discussion so far has focused on value creation aimed to increase patrons' support of the library. It is also important to consider that entrepreneurial librarians require support from their leadership and other library staff to reach their full potential. If entrepreneurial librarianship is about taking advantage of opportunities, it is equally about facing risks (Farkas, 2020). What if a new technology does not pay off? What if a new operational approach is rejected by the community? Librarians cannot be afraid to take chances and try new things when opportunities present themselves. Support and reliable safety nets facilitate growth in an entrepreneurial library. It is therefore crucial for modern library staff to accept risk and the possibility of failure so it can be managed positively.

Effective support begins with leadership (MacDonald & vanDuinkerken, 2015). Library leaders need to be at the forefront of reframing failures as future opportunities for improvement (Gutsche, 2017). It is realistic to expect that a solution proposed to tackle an issue in the community might not work out. Launching new projects can be risky business. When library staff watch their superiors take chances that result in failures, it is important that those same library leaders handle themselves with grace and continue seeking solutions that might work better next time. They teach other staff what to expect and how to move forward positively in the face of risk and potential failures. Leading by example to encourage productive behaviors will help other library staff feel secure and supported when taking on issues in their communities.

This attitude will be reflected in libraries' approach to service and even bleed out into the community. There are so many what-if's in the real world that fear of failure will stunt the

growth of both libraries and patrons. Further, fear of embarrassment can prevent librarians from acting when opportunities present themselves (MacDonald & vanDuinkerken, 2015). It is important for libraries to remain transparent with their users as they undertake risky or dramatic changes. Transparency helps patrons see the library's mission in action. Making patrons aware of the libraries' intentions for improvement in advance of implementation will prepare patrons to be forgiving of any delays caused by transition periods. It might also inspire them to suggest their own improvements.

Advantages in Librarianship

Today, libraries find themselves competing for users' attention and investment (Ghosh, 2019). A physical library can only hold a limited number of resources, whereas the Internet offers what seems like infinite resources at users' disposal. The more information that is available from one source, the more influential that source will be to users. In addition, convenience of access from personal devices is a bonus. In this way, the digital age has transformed information into a commodity as well as a resource (Davis, 2008). This is the foundation of competition that libraries face with tech giants and for-profit information organizations. Entrepreneurial librarianship can help libraries effectively apply their advantages over other information organizations.

One advantage that libraries have over tech giants like Google is their physical placement within the communities. Sophisticated algorithms may be able to narrow down a user's inquiry based on previous search behaviors, but a human librarian can interact with patrons on a personal level, listen to their needs and concerns in real time, and apply that information to improvements to library operations (Paraschiv, 2018). Every community that has a library is rich with opportunities to develop networks of relationships with the members of that community. The

stronger the network becomes, the more useful data an entrepreneurial librarian can gather to tailor services that meaningfully contribute to the wellbeing of the community (Fallows, 2020).

In addition to creating personal relationships with patrons, librarians can encourage and enable personal development in patrons. They can help improve patrons' lives. Librarians "enquire about users' needs and [become] responsible for delivering through effective management in order to optimize outcomes," (Ghosh, 2019). This can be accomplished as easily as assisting a user with a resume and asking them on their next visit whether they submitted the document or secured an interview. These are relational operations in action. By analyzing and drawing conclusions based on the activity of their patrons, entrepreneurial librarians can make their spaces more friendly, educational, usable, and accessible according to dynamic user need and demand, rather than by static transactions alone (Beyond Access, n.d.).

Entrepreneurial Librarianship during COVID

Pandemic Related Challenges

In the early days of the pandemic, many libraries were faced with a choice: to remain open for public access or to close temporarily for public safety. Idaho Falls Public Library (IFPL) staff made the decision to remain open despite calls from the ALA to put in-person services on hold (Ford, 2020). The IFPL director cited statements by Southeastern Idaho Public Health authorities that services could continue at the time. The director also reported that many patrons visiting in-person were using library computers and Internet service to file unemployment claims. Library attendance decreased dramatically in those early months, but had IFPL closed at first urgings, its patrons would have lost access to information technology when their financial security was on the line (Ford, 2020).

Similarly, the William B. Robertson Library at Bluefield State College adapted by keeping in-person services for students but barred access to community members. Staff asked visitors questions regarding their health and travel activity to minimize the risk of transmission at their location. Their goal was to decrease the risk of virus exposure while still providing the space and technology students relied on to participate in their classes (Ford, 2020). In both situations, librarians assessed conditions, weighed community needs, and took action based on their findings. Recognizing that their small-town locations suffered from Internet scarcity, these entrepreneurial librarians put in the work to balance service with safety until stay-at-home mandates across the United States halted in-person operations (Moreland, et.al, 2020).

On the spectrum of information access, there is a wide range of preferences when it comes to interacting with analog and digital resources, for an even wider variety of reasons (Horrigan, 2015). Libraries cannot just plow into the technological future without regard for the population they might be leaving behind, like those who have no access to the Internet or the devices that would even allow them to connect. Neither can libraries ground themselves in the past without becoming irrelevant in a changing society. Palfrey (2015) asserts that "Libraries provide access to the skills and knowledge necessary to fulfill our roles as active citizens" (par. 8). This rings true regardless of whether service is provided by analog or digital means.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that librarians cannot become overly reliant on their physical spaces. When they had to close their doors, libraries were left with a metaphorical hand tied behind their back. This could have easily been an excuse to accept that libraries could no longer survive in modern society, but something entirely different happened. Patrons continued seeking out library services despite the chaos of the world around them. In true

entrepreneurial fashion, librarians responded to community needs, demands, and desires in order to provide.

Identifying Community Needs

At the beginning of the pandemic, many lower-income populations lost access to the only locations where they could access Wi-Fi and computers for free. With libraries, schools, and businesses having closed their doors, these individuals were functionally cut off from society. Students were unable to attend virtual class or complete online assignments, employees were laid off or unable to transition to remote work, and friends and families were unable to maintain social contact (Cassata, 2021). Other individuals may not have even noticed the gravity of this loss if they already had Internet access, computers, tablets, cell phones, and media set up at home. Providing access to information technology like computers, tablets, laptops, and e-readers in addition to the Internet is increasingly necessary as more services transition to majority-online or online-only accessibility.

The COVID-19 pandemic revealed some prominent weaknesses in library abilities to provide both analog and digital service to community members. A major weakness was that libraries were unprepared to meet the need and demand for technology populations required without full use of their physical spaces. Inequities in technological access prevented patrons from being able to access resources such as digital collections, online government services, legal information, virtual learning, telemedicine, and other vital information. Another weakness was that libraries were unable to service patrons who were not familiar with modern technologies. For example, consider that many community members lacked either the desire or technological literacy to access library resources online.

These disadvantages threatened long-lasting consequences for those affected by them. The truth is that tablets or other devices are not enough to combat the digital divide (Brisson-Boivin & McAleese, 2021). Even if patrons can check out devices from their local library, those devices are glorified paperweights without access to the Internet, or without the skills to use them. As community hubs, libraries are positioned on the front line of the digital divide. "If one of the primary missions of a library is to provide access to information for free, in a new digital age that must include access beyond the library's walls" (Kohli, 2017, par. 8). When determining the kinds of information technology that community members need, it is important to remember that implementation cannot come at the expense of patrons with less access or ability.

Entrepreneurial Librarianship at Work

The pandemic served as a catalyst for developing modified services as quickly as possible to ensure patrons were not cut off from information resources. This included growing online resource collections, compiling COVID-19 resources for the community, and moving in-person activities into virtual performances patrons could participate in from the safety of their own homes, or from wherever they happened to log in (Fallows, 2020). Other services included curbside pickup, take-home crafts, and 24/7 Wi-Fi service in library parking lots (Fallows, 2020)**.** These changes resulted from librarians assessing the issues, coming up with creative solutions, and demonstrating the ability to manifest those solutions These examples of entrepreneurial librarianship apply existing resources to deliver service without compromising the library's core values.

Anythink Libraries in Adams County, Colorado, staffed a telephone call center for seniors and other patrons who wanted to speak with a librarian (Fallows, 2020). While this definitely may seem like a step back in terms of modernization, it demonstrates that librarians are

committed to serving all members of the community. The call center was immensely popular among seniors who wanted to remain in contact with library staff, even if just for a friendly chat. In addition, the call center was convenient for patrons with disabilities preventing them from commuting to the library, compromised immune systems that put them at risk of contracting COVID, those who could not access online chat services, and anyone else who just preferred to have a conversation with a fellow human.

In addition, libraries recognized the looming effects of isolation and worked to come up with enriching materials to prevent patrons from feeling lost, bored, or unproductive. Anythink Libraries developed a scrapbooking program so that patrons could create a record of how they spent their summer in a creative way (Fallows, 2020). This program included the distribution of notebooks, writing materials, and craft supplies to encourage creativity and imagination to combat the difficulties the pandemic brought about. Activities like this were popular among patrons with young children, especially as work and school turned virtual, and families adjusted to sharing a full house (CDC, 2019). Providing small projects, science experiments, and holiday crafts encouraged a sense of normalcy for library users of all ages (Clarkin, 2020)**.**

To combat the digital divide, some libraries established or expanded device loan programs so that patrons could take home laptops and hotspots to complete work or just browse the web on their own time. While device loan programs are not new developments in the library profession, the pandemic highlighted their value and potential. The Queens Library in New York has deployed thousands of tablets for their patrons to borrow. Even when faced with losses and damage, the Queens librarians remain committed to offering this service because they believe in its significance for people who would otherwise have no way to access these devices (Kohli,

2017). Regardless, not all libraries were or will be able to afford new devices to support checkout services, and that is okay.

There is no minimum requirement of physical resources that make a librarian entrepreneurial. The goal is to take the resources you have, or can have, and use them to give patrons the best opportunities to be successful in their personal and professional lives. Other ways to acquire resources can include partnerships with other information organizations. In some cases, partnerships can result in free access to the hardware and software these giants have to offer, thereby increasing patron access to technology that can help them better provide for the community around them (Kohli, 2017). Companies like Google, Apple, and Amazon have donated Wi-Fi hotspots, tablets, and other resources to libraries to facilitate access The mention of tech giants should not intimidate librarians. Instead, librarians must recognize their presence and services as opportunities to expand their own.

Librarians also took measures to communicate with and support each other in a time of simultaneous disconnection. Being able to connect in virtual spaces helped librarians communicate about challenges in their respective communities, make connections about wider issues, and brainstorm ways to maximize participation with limited resources. Librarians gathering together in virtual spaces "requires a willingness to look beyond our institutions and traditional hierarchies, but the collective influence we wield can create powerful positive change" (Farkas, 2020, par. 7). These collaborations also helped librarians realize the value of their work in society and to serve more patrons worldwide than they may have ever imagined possible before. Cultivating support in the profession is yet another manifestation of entrepreneurial librarianship.

Consequently, by advocating for themselves, librarians are also putting themselves in a position to better serve their patrons. Consider how many libraries had their funding or job security threatened by the COVID-19 pandemic. Had librarians not gathered to advocate for the necessity of their profession in a time of crisis, the virtual community spaces many patrons came to rely on throughout 2020 and 2021 would not exist. This alternate reality would have resulted in many more community members losing access to the technology that would allow them to continue participating in a wider world, whether through virtual programs, access to online information, the ability to check out devices or hotspots, or even places to sleep for the homeless.

Benefits to Community

Nearly two years into the pandemic, entrepreneurial librarians have innovated all sorts of solutions that cater to the unique needs of their communities. Many of the solutions implemented to uphold service to communities reflect the evolution of librarianship from transactional to relational, and from hierarchical to entrepreneurial. Throughout the pandemic, librarians have worked to enable independent information-seeking behaviors while remaining available and approachable to answer questions and support inquiries. Librarians have developed personal connections with their communities and looked for every opportunity that could facilitate value create among library users. Information technology played a huge role in keeping people connected during unprecedented times and proved to strengthen the value of libraries in modern society, rather than threaten it.

Modern librarians have emphasized providing patrons with various tools to meet their diverse needs. Entrepreneurial librarians seek to set goals that result in tangible benefits for library patrons. The director of IFPL reported that the patrons who visited the library during the

early stages of the pandemic expressed gratitude for their choice, demonstrating the value of ongoing library services. Librarians helped professionals, educators, and other patrons learn how to use services like Zoom and Google classroom, as well as providing information on copyright and the curation of digital resources to support classes and education (Zalusky, 2021). Personal investments and interactions with patrons will help library users reassess the value of libraries. Librarians are capable of uplifting community members who may or may not be aware of what resources exist to support their professions and goals.

Patrons may not be coming to the library as much to check out items or to schedule research inquiries with librarians as often as they have in the past, but they still appreciate the space as a community hub. "Libraries provide public spaces where people can congregate, share their common cultural and scientific heritage, and create knowledge" (Palfrey, 2015). Patrons are drawn to the library because they have come to offer free Wi-Fi, an assortment of useful devices, and the security of information professionals who can help them find answers to their questions or teach them about technology on the spot. Libraries are fully capable of providing a mix of analog, digital, in-person, and remote services. The library is an incredibly modern and versatile space, even in the face of rapid technological advancements.

Conclusion

Edewor & Omosor (2012) describe entrepreneurial librarianship as an innovation in itself. It adopts the theories of business and social entrepreneurship and applies them to the library profession in a way that will help librarians adapt to rapidly evolving information technologies without compromising the library's focus on community service and improvement. "Today's librarians are exploring new technologies in pursuit of excellence and embracing entrepreneurial spirit in order to survive this competitive age," (Ghosh, 2019, p. 2). So long as

entrepreneurial libraries continue to prioritize their communities, entrepreneurial librarianship, and information innovations like the Internet, are powerful means to an end in libraries, not just the end of libraries.

The barriers created by the pandemic coupled with decreased access to library resources resulted in more than just an inability to access information. It also threatened patrons' independence. Recall that as information technology becomes more accessible, patrons become less likely to turn to librarians for help with their inquiries. This trend, however, does not indicate a devaluation of library spaces. Rather, it is a wake-up call for librarians to change their approach to service. Adopting entrepreneurial librarianship breaks down the hierarchical structure of librarianship because it gives patrons more control over the resources they find and how they use them, making them more equal in status. The biggest opportunity of all is the opportunity to work alongside patrons as equals, encouraging the growth and innovation that benefits society.

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